Helpful Hypocrisy?

Investigating 'Double-Talk' and Irony in CSR Marketing Communications

Declarations of interest: none.

Abstract

Conventional definitions of corporate hypocrisy focus on decoupling talk and action; incidences where an organisation's 'talk' does not to match its 'walk'. In the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR), marketing communications are often aspirational and hence prone to accusations of hypocrisy. Is hypocrisy, however, always undesirable? This case-informed conceptual paper draws upon the Diesel 'Global Warming Ready' campaign to investigate how humour – specifically irony – elevates conventional understandings of hypocrisy towards what we term 'helpful hypocrisy'; a concept that mobilises audiences to critically reflect on complex ambiguities of CSR in non-moralizing ways. In doing so, we distinguish between idealised 'single-talk' and extended 'double-talk'. We develop an analytical model to help analyse the layers of double-talk in the context of ironic CSR marketing communications, and we construct a conceptual model that explains the role of double-talk and irony. Based on our research, we propose an agenda for future research.

Keywords: CSR Communication, CSR Consumption, Humour, Hypocrisy, Irony, Marketing.

Helpful Hypocrisy?

Investigating 'Double-Talk' and Irony in CSR Marketing Communications

" ...in the serious realm we normally employ a unitary mode of discourse which takes for granted the existence of one real world, and within which ambiguity, inconsistency, contradiction and interpretative diversity are potential problems. In contrast, humour depends on the active creation and display of interpretative multiplicity"
(Mulkay, 1988, 3-4; cited in Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993: 507).

1. Introduction

Grave, distressing and 'wicked' challenges of climate change, poverty, inequality and pollution do not intuitively invite amusement or a humoristic tone in their communication. Rather they call for serious, factual and honest communication of intentions and action from organisations, policy-makers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other engaged stakeholders (Waddock & Googins, 2011). Nevertheless, we have recently witnessed the emergence of humour in corporate social responsibility (CSR) marketing campaigns; communications that are usually designed to inform consumers and engage them in sustainable behavior (Sen & Bhattacharaya, 2001) based on accurate and transparent economic, social and environmental information (Podnar, 2008). For instance, recently large international fashion brands such as Patagonia and Diesel have challenged conventional and rational approaches to CSR marketing communication, choosing instead to incorporate a humorous (or more precisely, an ironic) edge to their visual representations as they address issues of climate change. Such campaigns are ironic because they bring a twist of message incongruity and thus, surprise to the audience. They depict such brands as reflexive agents; agents who are aware of their own carbon-footprint yet still celebrating the enjoyment of consumption; agents who conversely foresee the future for Arcadia *and* apocalypse and understand that their consumers want to somehow engage therein.

While similar parallels may be drawn to the likes of Sisley and Benetton who used shock advertising or 'shockvertising' – employing violent and aggressive topics of death, weapon and pornography to surprise an audience – (Parry et al., 2013) in earlier marketing campaigns (Larsson, 2001), connection of brands to challenging 'macro' social issues offer political statements as opposed to messages of intent. In contrast, the focal case of our paper – Diesel's Global Warming Ready (GWR) CSR marketing campaign – focuses squarely on the issue of climate change; an issue inextricably tied to Diesel's home turf and the highly polluting fashion industry. While Diesel's marketing campaigns have stimulated debate and critique for some time (Andersson, et al., 2004), they have as of yet failed to capture the attention of scholars interested in hypocrisy in the context of CSR. Are these organisations joking about climate change? Are they ridiculing politicians for not taking action? Are they mocking their consumers? Are they exposing their own failures – and those of the fashion and textile industry more broadly – in not acting sufficiently upon climate change?

Focussing our analysis on the *interpretation* of the GWR images – as opposed to their creation – one immediate reaction to these 'hypocritical' campaigns is that they might open the senders of these messages up to critiques of greenwash (Bowen, 2003; Peattie & Crane, 2005). Traditional thinking on CSR marketing communications would tell us that it is fundamentally problematic to deviate from presenting factual, consistent and truthful information in the context of CSR, as doing so evokes accusations of hypocrisy, or talk-action disconnects (Janney & Gove, 2011; Wagner et al., 2009). In this case-informed conceptual paper we extend such readings with an alternative analysis. Specifically, we offer a more 'helpful' view of hypocrisy, based on theories of humour, irony and organized hypocrisy to extend CSR marketing communication scholarship. We draw upon research that has forwarded a performative and constitutive vision for communication in shaping reality

(Boje, Oswick & Ford, 2004; Cabantous, et al., 2016; Taylor & Cooren, 1997) to explore more widely what the Diesel campaign is *doing* through a visual lens (Schroeder & Zwick 2007; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). Therein, this paper focusses in on the processes through which consumers make sense of the campaign, as opposed to suggesting outcomes. In doing so, we offer three contributions.

We first propose that assumptions about a 'unitary mode of discourse' as the ideal communication modus (Mulkay, 1988) – or what we here refer to as idealised 'single-talk' – convey a conventional framing that organisational 'talk' must match its 'walk'. Hypocrisy, understood as the distance between organizational talk and walk (Brunsson, 1989, 1993), is seen as undesirable and best avoided through consistent CSR marketing messages directed towards all audiences. Our main argument here is that such insight provides a limited backdrop to understanding the role of humour in contemporary CSR marketing communications. Here we draw on a more nuanced and darker form of humour as *irony*, as opposed to laugh-out-loud, slapstick humour. Our second contribution is to offer an analytical model to help analyse the levels of irony within hypocritical CSR marketing communications. Based on an illustrative case of Diesel's GWR campaign, we find that incongruities are present across four levels of 'double talk': framing, signifying, symbolising and ideologising (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Finally, our third contribution is to provide a conceptual model that suggests how an 'extended' analysis of irony in CSR marketing communications may be 'performative' as it provokes critical reflection and surprise through displaying inconsistencies between 'talk' and 'talk,' i.e. 'double-talk'. This encourages interpretative multiplicity (Mulkay, 1988) in providing various readings of the same campaign. In our conceptual model, we explain the roles of single- and double-talk, and we argue that irony is promoted via double-talk to mobilise audiences to critically reflect on how

to address the wicked problems we face in society and embrace their incongruity, creating new, alternative realities. We draw upon Brunsson (1989, 1993) to suggest that double-talk in the context of organized hypocrisy – a phenomenon that we term 'helpful hypocrisy' – may be necessary for organizations to navigate social and environmental complexity. This connects with Brunsson's (1993: 8-9) assertion that,

> "It is of course possible to argue that hypocrisy is a bad thing, which ought to be abolished at any price. One argument is that hypocrisy appears to be exactly what we demand of modern organizations: if we expose organizations to conflicting demands and norms, and expect that they should respond to them, then we must also expect hypocrisy."

While Brunsson (1993) notes how hypocrisy may be helpful for *organizations,* in recasting them as reflexive agents within debates of – for example – climate change, we add that organized hypocrisy may also be helpful for consumers in surfacing their own reflections as they ponder their environmental responsibilities. Hypocrisy may be helpful even for society, in publicly problematizing consumption.

This paper first presents our theoretical framework which integrates CSR marketing communication, hypocrisy and humour (specifically, irony) literatures. We then provide our analytical model which investigates the levels of irony in visual CSR marketing communication through discussion of our illustrative case. We then develop a conceptual model that unpacks double-talk and our new construct of 'helpful hypocrisy'. Finally, we offer managerial implications and lay out an agenda for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework: CSR Marketing Communications, Hypocrisy and Humour

2.1. CSR Marketing Communications. Research has shown how CSR messages in marketing campaigns can have positive implications for the corporate brand (Swaen &

Vanhamme, 2004), and marketing research has shown a positive response from consumers to companies with strong CSR profiles (Maignan, Ferrell & Ferrell, 2005; Sen & Bhattacharaya, 2001). This literature has argued that a company should focus beyond ethical and social issues related to immediate ethical product / service delivery concerns to also include those that do not have a direct impact on consumers, such as child labour, equal opportunities, and climate change (Maignan et al., 2005). In the marketing communications literature, there is thus a strong expectation that to be considered trustworthy and ethical, CSR messages should be truthful, i.e. aligned with the company's actions. In an overview article of CSR communication, Morsing (2017) argues that companies with effective CSR messages are expected to be societally oriented, sincere, and transparent about their actions. This is not only an expectation from consumers, but also a legal requirement. For example, according to Swedish Law, advertising,

> "…shall be legal, honest, reliable and not offensive. In addition, advertising shall not be discriminatory in relation to race, sex or religion. It should also be in accordance with professional business practice and have a feeling of social responsibility, so that the public's faith in advertising is not affected negatively (Civildepartementet, 1994)," (cited in Andersson et al., 2004: 97).

While most CSR marketing communications seem to adhere to these expectations, there are a few anomalies, such as the case of our analysis, Diesel's Global Warming Ready (GWR) campaign. Diesel's marketing communication has, with industry competitors Benetton and Sisley, previously been associated with 'shock advertising' or 'shockvertising' (Parry et al., 2013) with the purpose of engaging young audiences that are, "not susceptible to the traditional art of persuasion," in advertising communications (Andersson et al., 2004: 99). Shock advertising is defined as the attempt to "surprise an audience by deliberately violating norms for societal values and personal ideals ... to capture the attention of a target audience," (Dahl et al., 2009: 269). The shock emerges when marketing communication breaches social norms through 'offensive' advertising that includes topics such as 'weapons and arms'

(Andersson et al., 2004), pornography (Parry et al., 2013) and 'controversial products' (Fam et al., 2008). Research has argued that shocking imagery is often used to stimulate fear or a sense of threat in audiences (Hastings et al., 2004) as, "scare tactics to encourage attitude and behaviour change, for example, stopping smoking or ensuring safer driving," (Parry et al., 2013:11). Yet, evoking shock is not always the goal for companies employing such tactics. Indeed, it is argued the sole purpose may be to create space for consumers to reflect and, "create their own perception" according to Diesel's advertising agency commenting on an earlier campaign showing an armed soldier outside a school yard (see Andersson, et al., 2004: 100). So if shock is not the key aim, what is the purpose of such provocative CSR marketing communications that deviate from traditional communications norms? How might we theoretically interpret the active pursuit of ambiguity in CSR marketing communications?

2.2. Decoupling Talk and Action: Hypocrisy. Conventional definitions of corporate hypocrisy emphasise its basic criterion as a systematic decoupling between talk and action; "the belief that a firm claims to be something that it is not," (Wagner et al., 2009: 79). In particular, the field of CSR marketing communications has made the consistency between words and action one of its salient concerns (Morsing, 2017). Practitioners as well as scholars urge organisations to minimize discrepancies between different markers of CSR representations and actions, and to avoid 'gaps' between identity claims and actions (Balmer & Soenen, 1999; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011). It is argued that there is a need for 'sincere and authentic' CSR (Benabou & Tirole, 2010) as inconsistencies may harken to claims of greenwash and be seen by organizational leaders as disruptive for their personal identities (Morsing & Spence, 2019). Indeed, firms should avoid paying only symbolic 'lip-service' to CSR, with little substantive action or actions that deviate substantially from behaviour (Bowen, 2014; Cho et al., 2014; Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Peattie & Crane, 2005).

In this paper, we aim to demonstrate how conventional notions of hypocrisy are based in a view of communication ideals of 'speaking with one voice' (Christensen et al., 2006) or a 'unitary mode of discourse' (Mulkay, 1988), and how conventional CSR marketing communication assumes a type of communication that is serious, factual and truthful (e.g. Morsing, 2017). This is what we in this paper refer to as 'single-talk.' By highlighting how single-talk is a form of communication that may circumvent hypocrisy, we show how an 'alternative' theoretical perspective on communication – that appreciates multiplicity or 'double-talk' – may offer a different analysis of hypocrisy. We see the presence of double-talk as a novel and crucial brand differentiator. What's more, while Brunsson (1993) discusses the role of 'double standards' in organisations, his theorisation has largely been based around exploring the hypocrisy that necessarily emerges in organizations' communications to accommodate different stakeholders at the same time, who hold different interests and different criteria of success. We still know very little about how hypocrisy might be deployed *within* externally directed CSR messaging, where facts are expected but where aspirations are also known to reside (Christensen, Morsing & Thyssen, 2013; forthcoming).

Additionally, in his work on hypocrisy, Brunsson (1989) names several ways of 'managing' hypocrisy. He particularly focuses on the following four approaches: time (continue the never-ending conversation), space (present different statements to different audiences), 'sachlickeit' (favouring some issues, whilst keeping others in the dark) and division of labour between managers and subordinates (placing the responsibilities in an opaque bureaucracy) (Brunsson, 1989). The argument we forward in this paper is that humour (specifically irony) adds a new, positive dimension to how we may deal with hypocrisy, in mobilizing audiences to critically reflect on the complex ambiguities of CSR in non-moralizing ways. We refer to this as 'helpful hypocrisy.'

Our explanation of this alternative understanding, stems from 'performative', communication constitutes organisation (CCO) theorizing. In this research tradition, communication is not inferior to action, but has in itself performative properties (Taylor & Cooren, 1997; Cabantous, et al., 2016). Organisations are analyzed as, "phenomena in and of language" (Boje, Oswick & Ford, 2004: 571). While communication is most often seen as a conduit or channel for delivering a message, the CCO perspective emphasizes how communication not only *represents* reality but actively shapes it; words *do* things (Austin, 1962; Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009). We are interested in exploring the performative qualities of a particular kind of talk, namely humour, in the context of hypocrisy.

While CCO-inspired research has emphasized the separation of talk and walk and, for example, analyzed how aspirational talk may lead to transformative change (Christensen et al., 2013; Haack, Schoeneborn & Wickert, 2012) and other studies have suggested the simultaneous appearance of talk and walk, i.e. 't(w)alking' (Schoeneborn, Morsing & Crane, 2019), the focus of our analysis is rather the separation of 'talk' and 'talk,' i.e. two contrasting messages conveyed within the same message. This perspective helps us to adopt a performative view of humour that explores 'possibilities' of meaning' in hypocritical CSR settings (Schroeder & Zwick 2007; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). While we acknowledge that neither Austin's (1962) notion of communicative performativity nor Schoeneborn et al.'s (2019) notion of t(w)alking imply a normative idea of social improvement as an implication of communication, other recent CCO research has proposed how CSR communication may in fact perform improved social action (Christensen et al., 2013; Winkler, Etter & Castello, 2019). It is upon this basis that we nuance our treatment of humour.

2.3. Humour and Irony. Humour is often defined in terms of three qualities: (1) it is a type of communication, (2) it recognizes incongruities in meaning or relationships, and (3) it is

attended by laughter or a smile (Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993). In spite of its focus on incongruities and 'gaps' in meaning and relationships, the hypocrisy literature has yet to investigate the performative role of humour. As stated above, and besides Brunsson's (1989, 1993) work on organized hypocrisy, incongruities in the hypocrisy literature are deemed a transitory state towards alignment in the talk-walk and talk-talk relations (Wagner et al., 2009), yet in the humour literature, such gaps are celebrated (Young, 2017).

Important for understanding the performative potential of humour, management research has pointed to how humour emerges in every day scenarios, when discourse cannot handle the interpretative multiplicity needed to deal with complex issues (Mulkay, 1988). Indeed, humour emerges as a way of dealing with contradiction, incongruity and incoherence (Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993). Yet, while Hatch and Ehrlich's (1993) early study of humour in management contexts analyses the act of laughing as a way of mitigating routine-like situations, we are interested in another kind of humour. As opposed to a laughing-out-loud response, we focus on a more nuanced form of humour that triggers a reflective, wry smile by juxtaposing incongruent imagery. Here we draw upon Butler's (1990) idea of the 'performative surprise'; how fundamentals in society are challenged, ridiculed and levelled through humour. Through incongruity, humour embodies discursive ambiguity in which problematic or taboo topics are liberated and established social meanings are challenged without fear of reproach, rejection or recrimination through mockery (Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009). Being, "situationally dependent and subjective," (Greatbatch & Clark, 2003: 1518), humour unites, "the real and the unreal," (Nielsen, 2011: 500), offering more than one interpretation of reality. Research suggests that such incongruities create a juncture where, "incompatible frames of reference can be linked" and that such awareness may, "permit people to break away from routine 'single-plane' thinking to a 'double-minded, transitory

state of unstable equilibrium,'" (Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993: 507). It is in this regard that we explore how humour may invite and applaud, rather than stigmatise, inconsistency within hypocritical communications, drawing upon research on political humour, and more concretely, related to political satire and irony.

Political satire is a specific form of humour that seeks amusement from questioning the existing social or political order. It may be aggressive and provocative, but its underlying message is often optimistic, suggesting that 'we' deserve better (Young, 2017). It relates to an inversion of reality that forces the audience to consider shortsightedness that is, "ill-informed at best, or hypocritical and malevolent at worst," (Young, 2017: 4). It is often described as a participatory act that is premised upon prior knowledge of a topic where individuals are capable of deconstructing a satirical message and then reconstruct it to come to a new understanding (Holbert et al., 2013). In this way, the receiver of the message is trusted with much agency. The persuasive aspects of political satire have long been understood in engaging and mobilising audiences. For instance, in ancient Greece and Rome political satire was celebrated and feared due to its influence on shaping public opinion. More recently linguistics, psychology and sociology have explored its influence on preventing alienation, cynicism and apathy, and particularly in engaging a younger demographic in politics (Balmas, 2014; Boukes et al., 2015). Indeed, younger audiences who have become somewhat 'immune' to the controversial 'shockvertising' tactics discussed earlier (Parry et al. 2013) are somewhat more receptive to political humour (Young, 2017), and irony (see Christopher, 2019).

A common tool employed in political satire is irony. Irony emerges when a text demonstrates a gap between what is said and what is meant, or as Bergson (1921: 127) phrases it, "sometimes we state what ought to be done and pretend to believe that this is just what is

actually being done; then we have irony." And in the words of Young (2017: 4), "just as satirical texts present critiques of society's ills through a humorous lens, irony offers a useful mechanism to playfully expose the gap between the way things are and the way things should be." Here Young (2017) refers to Jonathan Swift's (1729) 'A Modest Proposal', which discusses a plan to remedy the economic and social problems of Ireland by feeding poor malnourished children to Ireland's upper class. While Swift (of course) does not believe or mean what he suggests, his text is both ironic (in signifying a 'surprising' sentiment that runs contrary to societal expectations) and satirical (as the act of comprehending the text requires the reader to question the dispassionate, rational perspective underlying his economic argument) (Young, 2017: 4). Irony, we argue, 'performs' in that it elicits a touch of optimism while it serves to promote reflection on serious topics in a way similar to how Weick (2015: 117) has argued that ambiguity serves to help people to "grasp more of a situation" while "refraining from simplifications." In short, irony encourages audiences to 're-imagine' the organisations and institutions we live with (Du Gay 2007: 13).

While irony offers a fruitful lens through which to understand the performative role of incongruity, it is important to remember that humour may also undermine message credibility, with serious messages being pacified as "just a joke" (LaMarre & Walther, 2013; Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2007). In particular, while humour plays a key role in communicating critical or even taboo subjects, such as gender, sex or death (Parry et al., 2013), such messages are more likely to be contested when derived from for-profit organizations as opposed to not-for-profits (Parry et al., 2013). Thus, humour arriving from corporations may unify or divide audiences (Meyer, 2000). From the perspective of corporate sustainability and CSR, we are interested in exactly this sphere of ambiguity.

Summing up our theoretical framework, we base our analytical inquiry on CSR marketing

communications with literatures on organized hypocrisy and humour (particularly irony) in the context of a performative view of communication. We see humour as playing a key role in not only decoupling talk and action, but also in creating ambiguity in talk-talk relations, to enable audiences to engage in complex challenges of climate change. We now present our illustrative case and use this to first, build an *analytical model* that analyzes levels of irony in the context of a CSR marketing communication campaign and second, a *conceptual model* that delineates what we term 'single' and 'double-talk' in the context of (helpfully) hypocritical CSR communication.

3. Visual Frame Analysis and Hypocrisy in CSR Marketing Communication

3.1. Illustrative Case: Diesel 'Global Warming Ready': Adopting a visual case study approach (Yin, 1994), we focus our attention on hypocritical double-talk on the fashion brand Diesel, launched in 1978, and now operating 400 stores in a range of international markets. Famed for its luxury fashion lines and denim in particular, Diesel visuals usually convey the brand's focus on passion, individuality and self-expression (Diesel 2018). The Diesel 'Global Warming Ready' (GWR) campaign launched in 2007 (see Appendix 1) presented a marked departure from traditional brand communications. Since then, Diesel communications have continued to court controversy, akin to 'shockvertising' (Parry et al. 2013). For instance, its most recent campaign encouraged consumers to print the worst insults they have ever received on clothing in a bid to fight online abuse (Campaign, 2018). This campaign was labelled 'the more hate you wear, the less you care.'

In drawing attention to the plights of climate change, the GWR campaign introduced beautiful models in apocalyptic settings – flooded Rio de Janiero and Paris filled with

tropical plants – and quickly became the subject of critique. To some, these eight visuals poked fun at environmentalists, suggesting that the consumer society will prevail over global warming:

> "Diesel is appealing the worst aspect of human nature – one of greed and selfishness. Perhaps the people who own Diesel might like to watch films of children dying in floods in Bangladesh, where existing floods are being exacerbated by climate change. It might just get them to understand that making 'funny' little advertising campaigns out of misery really is beneath contempt," (Young, 2007).

To others, this campaign offered a timely, fresh and alternative opportunity to engage consumers in issues of climate change and was awarded the 'Silver Lion for Print' at Cannes International Advertising Festival 2007. While two short adverts in the form of satirical films also supported the campaign, the videos are less sophisticated in their execution, juxtaposing hedonistic and apocalyptic narratives side by side, rather than blending the two narratives in a complex, ironic visualization that calls for engaged reflection among the audiences. Consequently, our analysis focuses on the images only.

3.2. A Constructionist Approach to Visual Analysis: This case-informed conceptual paper builds upon the 'visual turn' within organisation and management studies (Bell & Davison, 2013; Meyer et al., 2013) and explorations into visual ethics within the marketing and communications literature (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005). Specifically, our CCO lens aligns with a social semiotics approach to visual analysis which involves deconstructing layers of meaning within adverts through exploring signs and symbols (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Focusing on the performative and rhetorical power of visuals through the lens of 'visual framing' that asserts that messages are, "received more readily in visual form," (Messaris & Abraham, 2001: 225), our work is premised upon the idea that we classify and organise life into 'schemata of interpretation' or 'frames' in order to understand the world around us (Goffman, 1974). Through identifying points of ambiguity in, for example, political events

such as representations of the European refugee crisis in national newspapers (Zhang & Hellmueller, 2017), the Tunisian uprising (Lim, 2013) and even the framing of climate change as a political issue in US press (Rebich-Hespanha et al., 2015), we believe that this approach is well-suited to exploring hypocrisy in the context of climate change. Specifically, we utilise and extend Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) four-tiered model of identifying and analysing visual frames to guide our analysis, which we elaborate on below.

We aim to offer both denotational analysis – literal description of the adverts through articulating form, subject and genre – as well as connotative meanings that reflect and construct broad societal, cultural, and ideological codes (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002; Schroeder & Salzer-Morling, 2006). In doing so we appreciate the nature of advertising polysemy; the occurrence of different interpretations for the same advertising message (Puntoni, Schroeder & Ritson, 2006). There is not one, objective 'truth' that expresses facts about climate change in the Diesel GWR advertisements, particularly given the unique combination of real (photograph) and fantasy (backdrop). There are in fact myriad meanings that may be elicited here, and we believe that these simultaneous representations play a central role in forming conceptions of the consumer (and industry) role in climate change (Schroeder & Zwick 2007). We acknowledge the subjective nature of decoding advertisements and are reflexive of our own biases in reading these adverts (Puntoni, Schroeder & Ritson, 2006). We thus provide the adverts in Appendices and invite the reader to consider their own interpretations as they deconstruct the deeper meaning of the GWR campaign. Indeed images, "consist of surface and depth and can be appreciated only through effort to learn their life story," (Schroeder & Salzer-Morling 2006: 19).

4. Analytical Framework: Levels of Irony in Hypocritical CSR Marketing Communications

4.1. Identifying Double Talk: A visual analysis of the Diesel GWR campaign reveals four conceptual levels of irony in hypocritical CSR marketing communications: framing, signifying, symbolising and ideologising (see Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011). It is the last frame that reveals the underlying ideological assumption of double-talk. In Figure 1 we present our analytical model that depicts the levels guiding our analysis and the relations between our conceptual levels. Below we summarize our analysis of the GWR campaign.

[Insert Figure 1 around here]

4.2. Hypocritical Framing. At perhaps the most superficial level, double-talk occurs through the juxtaposition of imagery: reality (actual photos of models) vs. fantasy (surrealist, computer generated backdrops). The presentation of Diesel models alongside dystopian climate change contexts enables the audience to organise stimuli into themes, without actively acknowledging their interpretation or meaning. Two frames are broadly conveyed in the GWR campaign: 'the commercial frame' (business as usual; the models convey what we would expect from a Diesel campaign) vs. 'the science frame' (the world is changing; the backgrounds are surprising and unexpected). It is the former that is dominant in presenting a hedonistic consumer lifestyle. Life is short, and the world will end anyway, why not enjoy Diesel clothes and feel good? It is the latter, science frame that presents the visible and drastic impact of climate change. The flooded scenes of New York and Rio de Janiero and the warm and tropical climate of Paris are in stark contrast to the reality we know today; they present images of devastation in terms of species extinction and lives submerged under water.

Irony in this context is created through pure incongruity: the luxury brand presenting an apocalyptic future for its consumers.

4.3. Hypocritical Signifying. At a deeper level of interpretation, double-talk occurs through the interplay of different social meanings. These are conveyed through objects that broadly align with two competing narratives: survival vs. destruction. The clothes, the accessories, the poses, the bodies in the GWR campaign, all convey an air of affluence and celebrate, to some extent, materialism. Rio de Janeiro is not just experienced underwater, but on a *yacht*. New York is not just submerged under water but is also seen from the upper echelons of a city *skyscraper*. Consumers are not just surviving in this new world but *thriving*. Yet, Diesel is a brand that oozes sophistication and this form of blatant opulence is at odds with the tale of destruction that surrounds these individuals. Is there a darker message here? Are these individuals enjoying their last romantic embrace, looking fabulous in Diesel jeans as the world ends around them? Are they 'going down in style'? The viewer is not face-to-face with the subjects, more a casual observer to 'natural' interactions where individuals engage in seemingly mundane activities, e.g. pouring sand out of shoes, and playfully walking a pet. However, the unreal context of these everyday activities (i.e. the shoe is a stiletto from a woman sitting on the Chinese Wall now buried in sand, the pet is an iguana in a tropical garden at the foot the Eiffel Tower), provides the observer with an uneasy sense of reality. These inferences point to the role of irony in destabilising conceptions of climate change as apocalyptic, and in fact present surprising alternatives in which audiences are invited to laugh at themselves: 'Buy Diesel and we can adapt to climate change.'

4.4. Hypocritical Symbolising. Do the individuals presented in the GWR climate change reality enjoy this surrealist scenario? At yet a deeper level of analysis, through double-talk we

can infer emotions from the GWR campaign and attribute meaning to the symbols that are conveyed in the form of utopia (e.g. smiles, relaxed poses) and dystopia (e.g. an excessive amount of sun cream being frantically applied to avoid harmful radiation). The individuals presented are largely aloof; they show an apparent disregard for the apocalyptic settings around them, conveying an air of decadence and self-indulgence. They are playful; spraying a partner with water, laughing, caught up in a romantic embrace, fully distracted from the chaos that surrounds them. Even their clothing is largely impractical (e.g. heels in the dessert; skimpy bikinis in a world struggling with harmful radiation). Perhaps even a little sexuality is conveyed by intense glances, bare flesh and the combination of one man with (at least) one woman in each frame. Irony here relates to the bold idea that perhaps we can not only survive the future that lies ahead, but that we may, in fact, lead a better, more luxurious, more fulfilling and sexually rewarding lifestyle (particularly for men). There is a clear disconnect between dystopian and utopian visions of climate change, and for the role of Diesel therein. Can utopia and dystopia co-exist? This idea could be related to the classic bible story of human survival i.e. saving the planet, its animals and its people; leaving earth as we know it in a boat, Noah's Ark (the seductive imagery of Diesel's 'Ark') and believing there is something better for the future.

4.5. Hypocritical Ideologizing. This final level of analysis connects double-talk with a deeper ideology; that of the role of capitalism in society. The somewhat inconvenient truth, or 'beauty' (Bradshaw & Zwick, 2016), underpinning these images is that the fashion and textile industry – Diesel's industry – is one of the worst polluters and is complicit in accelerating climate change. The 'catastrophe' of climate change being highlighted thus presents the darkest and deepest form of humour; that which creates uncomfortable questions. Are Diesel poking fun at themselves? Are they laughing at us for buying their clothes? Are they joking

at the expense of climate change supporters? Here the incongruity between a pro- and anti-consumption message is the most striking but also the most risky from a commercial perspective. Are Diesel acting as political activists prompting a new form of deliberative discussion amongst their consumers, or actually further promoting the consumer society? Without a clear steer as to which ideology Diesel aligns, it is here that the notion of the performative surprise (Butler, 1990) and irony in the shape of double-talk is most visible in opening up the greatest space for ambiguity, reflection and perhaps, change.

4.6. Analytical Summary: Within each of the four conceptual frames we have identified, hypocrisy in the form of irony between two types of 'talk' is apparent. The first three levels of the conceptual model (framing, signifying and symbolising) help to substantiate and arrive at the fourth level, i.e. the underlying ideological meaning behind the double-talk of the CSR marketing communication. We find the ironic ideologies permeating the GWR campaign collide in the overall narrative of 'co-existence of paradise and consumption', that brings together the symbols and stylistic features, "into a coherent interpretation of 'why' the visuals are being used in this way," (Rodriquez & Dimitrov, 2011: 52). In our analysis, human co-existence revolves around accepting how consumption patterns contribute to apocalyptic planetary transformations, yet at the same time creating new moments of enjoyment in these dystopic surroundings. This is a narrative about how humans (facilitated by Diesel) might be able to pursue hedonistic lifestyles that contribute to dystopian implications (hypocrisy), however resulting in a new, liminal utopia that is suspended between reality and fantasy (helpful hypocrisy). The passive acceptance of climate change depicted in the campaign is supported by an undertone of inevitability. There is no indication of human beings fighting climate change; rather humans accept their destiny and – as the campaign title of 'Global

Warming Ready' suggests – they are already ready for it. In Table 1 we summarise our analysis of Diesel's GWR campaign against our analytical framework.

[Insert Table 1 around here]

5. Discussion: Helpful Hypocrisy and Double-Talk

To help extend analysis of the performativity of inconsistencies between 'double-talk' in CSR marketing communications (Christensen et al., 2013; Haack et al., 2012), and to extend conventional understandings of the potentially 'helpful' contributions of hypocrisy in the context of 'wicked problems' (Brunsson, 1989, 1993), we have undertaken a visual frame analysis of the Diesel GWR campaign (Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011). In doing so, we have proposed an analytical model (Figure 1) that unpacks the role of irony in hypocritical CSR marketing communications at cognitive, symbolic, emotional and ideological levels. This model reveals the ambiguities of climate change within CSR marketing communications, and the potential for visual forms of humour and irony to create double-talk or new 'possibilities' of meaning' (Schroeder & Zwick 2007; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002).

From here, we develop a conceptual model that explains the role of double-talk and irony for CSR marketing communications and elucidates how audiences engage in three 'glances' on Diesel's GWR campaign. In the *first glance*, 'single talk' is the preferred and idealised mode of CSR marketing communications. Here, incongruity between 'talk' and 'talk', as well as between 'talk' and 'walk', is hypocritical and seen as undesirable. In the *second glance,* we suggest that the reading of 'double-talk' and the ironic messaging, although visually present, may not be detected or appreciated by the audience, leading again to an understanding of

negative, conventional hypocrisy. In the *third glance*, through a second reading of 'double-talk', we suggest that irony is acknowledged and appreciated by an audience, transforming conventional perceptions of hypocrisy into 'helpful hypocrisy', mobilising new meanings of climate change. In daring to communicate such message ambiguity on a complex and dire topic helps to cast the organisation as a reflexive agent and to support key stakeholders, particularly consumers, who wish to reflect on their own consumption choices. We speculate that this may even be helpful for society in advancing difficult discussions on climate change amongst, for example, a young generation, that is somewhat more receptive to the ambiguity of political humour (Young, 2017). We elaborate on these insights below and in Figure 2.

[Insert Figure 2 around here]

5.1. Glancing: Hypocrisy and Single-Talk: Our conceptual model shows how conventional and idealised expectations of CSR marketing communications as 'single-talk', views communication as a unitary discourse that is factual, truthful and serious (Mulkay, 1988). This is shown in the 'glancing (no irony)' arrow in Figure 2 from 'single-talk' to 'no evidence of hypocrisy', where audiences expect CSR marketing communications to be congruent with CSR action (that CSR 'talk' matches the 'walk'). In this vein, CSR marketing communications orchestrate fact-based messages that do not deviate from CSR activities on climate change and audiences decode these messages as 'correct' and in accordance with current reality and therefore to be trusted. Here, agency largely rests with message formulator; the CSR / marketing team is trusted to present accurate information that is then interpreted by different audiences. Such examples of single-talk may include CSR reports (e.g. often certified by a third party), on-pack labels or certifications (e.g. ethical shortcuts that come with a mark of authenticity) or even CSR marketing communications that provide

tangible, visual evidence of CSR benefits to the environment (e.g. measures of carbon reduction). These communications actively seek to avoid claims of greenwash (Bowen, 2003; Peattie & Crane, 2005) and talk-action disconnects (Janney & Gove, 2011; Wagner et al., 2009) in order to retain organisational legitimacy through talk-walk alignment. Any form of ambiguity or incongruity is actively avoided.

5.2. First Glance: Hypocrisy and Double-Talk: We propose – as shown by the 'first glance (no irony)' arrow between incongruity and conventional hypocrisy in Figure 2 – that Diesel's GWR campaign may lead to perceptions of hypocrisy largely due to the juxtaposition of different narratives (e.g. fantasy vs. reality). Here, interpretation rests at a superficial level – the level of 'framing' – where a 'first glance' reveals stark contrasts between different kinds of images. Deeper interpretation of what these images are *doing* is not undertaken and the performative role of the campaign is restricted; its comprehensive potential not appreciated (Taylor & Cooren, 1997; Cabantous, et al., 2016). In this analysis, the ironic double-talk of Diesel's campaign context does not engage; the irony that Diesel, as an organization within the polluting fashion and textile industry is communicating about climate change, only adds to the sender's untrustworthiness. Such analysis is still, as outlined above, assuming single-talk as the ideal form of communication, and accordingly will consider the double-talk of Diesel's GWR campaign as a hypocritical statement akin to greenwashing (Bowen, 2014).

5.3. Second Glance: Helpful Hypocrisy and Double-Talk: Third, we propose – as shown by the 'second glance (irony) arrow', which leads to 'helpful hypocrisy' – how double talk can also draw on an ironic form of humour that affords audiences with the opportunity to feel part of a cognizant, cosmopolitan elite that is knowledgeable about the complexities of climate change and is able to joke about them. Here the humour of double-talk is appreciated as an

ironic and surprising expression of hypocrisy; giving the dire implications of climate change a seductive and unconcerned yet concerned twist. In this perspective, incongruities unearthed through the fourth level of ideologising, enable a fundamental question to be unearthed and interrogated: What does Diesel want me to do with this campaign? Consume or not to consume? Here, double-talk appreciates the necessity of incongruity in conversations about climate change and the presence of diverging opinions or facts in an attempt to embrace authenticity (Innocenti & Miller, 2016). Making one form of 'talk' superior to another may lead to suppression and negligence of other equally important talks, or what Deetz (1981) labels 'discursive closure'.

It is important to highlight that we do not excuse Diesel and the underlying commercial intent of this campaign. We are also avidly aware that this campaign may also appeal to cynical existentialists and climate change deniers. We do, however, strongly believe that the GWR campaign offers a helpful, 'performative surprise' (Butler, 1990) by intertwining contradictory and incongruous *pro-* (Diesel makes you look and feel good) and *anti-*consumption messages (the dire impact of global warming is disastrous). This is not about espousing one future 'truth' and avoiding moralizing or imposing guilt and blame. Rather, it is about acknowledging a campaign that provides a surprising and fresh depiction of the contradictions accompanying climate change, prompting critical reflection upon the ambiguity of human beings' inherent desire for luxurious consumption despite its dire implications.

A central dimension of the persuasive force of the GWR campaign is how it assigns agency to the audience of the campaign rather than the message sender. It is the audience who is invited, "to decide whether the humorous political argument deserves serious scrutiny", as

Innocenti and Miller argue (2016: 367). While we cannot claim to know the outcomes of this campaign for each and every reader, we can point to the *potentiality* of the campaign in mobilising new ways of thinking about climate change, and the role of Diesel therein. In this way, the double-talk of CSR marketing communications evokes a surprised smile among the audience, combining usually separate forms of talk (i.e. moralizing, concerned talk about dystopia and hopeful, climate-change denial talk about utopia), in one message that is open for reflection. In this perspective, GWR's double-talk seeks to conquer the attention of a generation of young consumers and enable them to be concerned about the future whilst more carefully appreciating, consuming and enjoying the moment. While the message loaded with strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg 1984; Guthey & Morsing, 2014) is obviously designed by Diesel, the decision on how to engage further with climate change, growth and consumption is left with the audience to decide.

6. Conclusion

Our case-based study of Diesel's GWR campaign offers three key contributions for scholars interested in hypocrisy in a CSR marketing communications context. First, our paper analyses how incongruities in the talk-walk and the talk-talk relationships in a CSR message – importantly epitomized by irony – perform a central element of perceptions of hypocrisy. Communication scholars have for long noted how conventional understandings of hypocrisy are based on such ideal of consistency between words and action (Christensen, Morsing & Cheney, 2008; Morsing, 2017; Mulkay, 1988). This literature highlights how incongruity is seen as hypocrisy, which leads to evaluations of greenwash (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). In this perspective, Diesel is conceived of as an amoral, hypocritical organisation that wants to profit from the misery of the planet. We refer to this idealised vision of CSR marketing

communication as ‘single-talk’, where agency is in the hands of the sender, who delivers consistent talk-talk and talk-walk messages. While this is an ideal that is necessary to strive for in many social situations, we point to how this ideal holds an under-recognized performativity in that it stimulates a certain interpretation of inconsistency as ‘negative’. Our observation points to how this may be a somewhat reductionist approach to understanding CSR marketing communications in an era of post-truth and fake news, where message performativity differs from channeling messages through from sender to receiver, but importantly involves engaging audiences in critical thinking.

Second, based on our visual frame analysis of Diesel’s GWR campaign (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011) (see Figure 1 for our analytical model), we find that incongruity is present across four levels of irony in hypocritical CSR marketing communications: fantasy versus reality (framing), survival versus destruction (signifying), utopia versus dystopia (symbolising) and political activism versus consumer society (ideologising). These are the central inconsistencies of Diesel’s GWR campaign and what we term ‘double-talk’, or talk-talk incongruities. The contribution we make in introducing double-talk particularly connects with the CSR marketing communications literatures which have rarely examined humour in light of the dominance of a unitary mode of discourse (e.g. Maignan et al., 2005; Sen & Bhattacharaya, 2001; Swaen & Vanhamme, 2004).

Third, we propose a conceptual model (see Figure 2) based on our analysis of Diesel’s GWR campaign, in which incongruities inherent in the same CSR message – and importantly epitomized by humour – are analysed as ‘helpful hypocrisy’ based on double-talk. Our observation is premised on a view of humour congruent with political satire and irony where audiences are presented with the ambiguities and contradictions of complex issues that are

not easily addressed or solved (Balmas, 2014; Boukes et al., 2015). Importantly, in this vein, the sender of the CSR marketing communications entrusts audiences with some agency to interpret the messages, as there is no one unitary or authoritative way of understanding the message. Rather, double-talk invites multiple interpretations and reflections and understandings of how to approach climate change within CSR marketing communications. While much of the literature on humour in management literature focuses on humour as a tool for dealing with contradiction, incongruity and incoherence (Hatch & Ehrlich, 1993), we point to another performative role of humour, that provokes critical thinking and acknowledgement of complexity when addressing 'wicked problems'. Here, 'helpful' hypocrisy reveals the performative nature of CSR marketing communications, in line with CCO theorizing (Christensen et al., 2013; Haack et al., 2012), albeit through a visual analysis that 'constructs' knowledge of climate change. In this way, our analysis also adds new insight into Brunsson's (1989) conception of four approaches to managing hypocrisy through temporal, spatial, selective disclosure and division of labour, as we propose humour (specifically irony) as a fifth approach.

Alongside these theoretical contributions, we also hope that this novel research on humour, CSR talk and hypocrisy will stimulate thinking amongst practitioners and policymakers who are looking for new ways to engage a younger demographic in issues of climate change, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more broadly. As the likes of Greta Thunberg and other environmental activists demand more urgent recognition of the 'climate catastrophe' we are currently living within, we must consider new ways of engaging (fashion) consumers in more responsible and reflective practices. Indeed, hypocrisy may not just be helpful in generating new debates around climate change – and the role of organisations therein – but may also be an *enjoyable* activity for consumers who are

embracing ambiguity and looking for a new interpretation of the 'good life' beyond capitalism as we know it today (Soper, 2008). This is particularly poignant as mainstream brands such as Nike and Gillette turn to more overtly political messaging in their campaigns, prompting deeper and critical reflection on issues of social sustainability. Yet, such reflective activities surrounding the environmental agenda are somewhat more scant, bar the examples that this paper has illuminated.

Additionally, while we find that hypocrisy and humour might be morally justifiable in sparking off new debates around CSR issues, we are also mindful that this form of humour may lead to a dysfunctional form of performativity. Scholars have noted how humour is highly contextual (Parry et al., 2013) and how political humour is, "not a reliable tool," (Laineste, 2013: 489). Humour may lead to apathy, cynicism or at worst, pathological or counter-productive responses to combat climate change. In sum, the situated nature of humour may lead to unintended consequences (Innocenti & Miller, 2016) which should not be underestimated, particularly given robust critiques of placing environmental responsibility in the hands of 'capitalisms captains' who continue to prioritise a commercial agenda over social issues (Bradshaw & Zwick, 2016).

Our paper emphasizes the potential performativity of CSR marketing communications and points to the need for further research in three key areas. First, we suggest future empirical research into the role/s of humour in CSR marketing communications, as well as insight into *how* organisations perform the careful balancing acts between 'conventional' hypocrisy and 'helpful' hypocrisy in their communications. Diesel's GWR campaign remains a rare exemplar of double-talk and helpful hypocrisy. It would be useful to unearth potentially related campaigns to discern just how common this form of communication is and the

different ways in which it is manifest (e.g. is helpful hypocrisy also present in written or virtual communication?). We also advocate examination of double-talk and helpful hypocrisy as an inherent element of corporate political activism, where corporate leaders are often accused of speaking with 'two voices', engaging in commercial as well as political interests. Such studies would offer useful contributions to the CSR communications and marketing communications literatures. Second, we believe that exploring the non-governmental (NGO) context may prove fruitful in expanding upon 'helpful hypocrisy', as this sector frequently utilises (dark) humour and irony to mobilise reflective thinking and engagement. We are keen for such research to illuminate the socially beneficial – as well as potentially unintended – outcomes of helpful hypocrisy, with a view to informing policy-makers on how to better engage the public towards double-talk and the complexities inherent in climate change debates. Research in this vein could consider more adeptly, for whom is helpful hypocrisy most helpful? In what ways is helpful hypocrisy helpful? Does humour mobilise some audiences and alienate others?

Thirdly, given the subjective and situated nature of humour (Greatbatch & Clark, 2003: 1518), we suggest that laboratory experiments that compare individuals' responses when exposed to single-talk (devoid of hypocrisy) as opposed to double-talk (embracing hypocrisy) could help to illuminate the potential and limits of helpful hypocrisy in CSR marketing communications. We are aware that the Diesel GWR campaign was launched over a decade ago and sentiments around corporate political activity – and climate change therein – have evolved. Empirically investigating various moderating factors at the individual level such as time, geography and culture may offer greater nuance into the sensitivities surrounding helpful hypocrisy in a broader variety of contexts, further contributing to Brunsson's theorisation of hypocrisy (1989, 1993) through humour. Interpretative exploration of the

emotions that are elicited through incongruity in CSR marketing communication could offer greater insight into the sense-making processes surrounding double-talk in this vein. Overall, we hope to stimulate further interest into exploring exactly how talk-talk disconnects are not always expressions of conventional hypocrisy, but that double-talk may, in fact, also serve as an expression of mobilising engagement in a troubled world.

References

Andersson, S., Hedelin, A., Nilsson, A. & Welander, C. (2004). Violent advertising in fashion marketing, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 8(1), 96-112.

Ashcraft, K.L., Kuhn, T.R., & Cooren, F. (2009). Constitutional Amendments: 'Materiali zing' organisational communication. *The Academy of Management Annals,* 3(1), 1-64.

Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Balmas, M. (2014). When Fake News Becomes Real: Combined Exposure to Multiple News Sources and Political Attitudes of Inefficacy, Alienation, and Cynicism, *Communication Research*, 41 (3), 430-545.

Balmer, J.M.T. & Soenen, G.B. (1999). The Acid Test of Corporate Identity Management, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, (1-3), 69-92.

Bell, E., & Davison, J. (2013). Visual Management Studies: Empirical and Theoretical Approaches, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 15, 167-184.

Benabou, R. & Tirole, J. (2010). Individual and corporate social responsibility. *Economica*, 77(305), 1-19.

Bergson, H. (1921). *Laughter*. New York: Macmillan.

Boje, D.M., Oswick, C., & Ford, J.D. (2004). Introduction to special topic forum. Language and Organisation: The doing of modern discourse. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(4), 571-577.

Boukes, M., Boomgaarden, H. G., Moorman, M. & de Vreese1, C. H. (2015). At Odds: Laughing and Thinking? The Appreciation, Processing, and Persuasiveness of Political Satire, *Journal of Communication*, 65, 721-744.

Bowen, F. (2014). *After Greenwashing: Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism and*

Society. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Bradshaw, A. & Zwick, D. (2016). The Field of Business Sustainability and the Death Drive: A Radical Intervention, Journal of Business Ethics, 136, 267-279.

Brunsson, N. (1989). *The Organisation of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions and Actions in Organisations.* Wiley.

Brunsson, N. (1993). The Necessary Hypocrisy. *The International Executive*, 35(1):1-9.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.

Cabantous L., Gond, J-P., Harding, N. & Learmonth, M. (2016). Reconsidering Critical Performativity. *Human Relations*, 69, 197–213.

Campaign (2018), Celebrities wear hate on their sleeves in Diesel's campaign to fight online abuse: https://goo.gl/E4dvS7 (accessed 20th September 2018).

Cho, C.H., Laine, M., Roberts, R.W. and Whitwell, G.J. (2014). Lost in translation: Exploring the Ethical Consumer Intention-Behaviour Gap. *Journal of Business Research*, 67 (1), 2759-2767.

Christensen, L.T., Morsing, M & Cheney, G. (2006). *Corporate communications: Convention, complexity and critique*, Sage: London.

Christensen, L.T., Morsing, M. & Thyssen, O. (2013). CSR as aspirational talk. *Organization* 20(3): 372-393.

Christensen, L.T., Morsing, M. and Thyssen, O. (forthcoming). Timely hypocrisy? Hypocrisy temporalities in CSR Communication. *Journal of Business Research*.

Christopher (2019). 'Irony' Music Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jpo5bvu3Nc

Dahl, D.W., Sengupta, J. & Vohs, K.D. (2009). Sex in Advertising: Gender Differences and the Role of Relationship Commitment, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (2), 215-231.

Deetz, S. (1992). *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization: Developments in Communication and the Politics of Everyday Life*. New York: SUNY Press.

Delmas, M. A. & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The Drivers of Greenwashing, *California Management Review*, 54 (1), 64-87.

Diesel (2018): https://uk.diesel.com/en/about-diesel/article-aboutdiesel.html, Accessed 05 February 2018.

Du Gay, P. (2007). *Organizing Identity: Persons and Organisations After Theory*. London: Sage.

Eisenberg, E. M. (1984). Ambiguity as Strategy in Organisational Communication. *Communication Monographs*, 51 (3), 227–242.

Fam, K.S., Waller, D.S., Ong, F.S. & Yang, Z. (2008). Controversial product advertising in China: Perceptions of three generational cohorts, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 7: 461–469.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Greatbatch, D., & Clark, T. (2003). Displaying Group Cohesiveness: Humour and Laughter in the Public Lectures of Management Gurus, *Human Relations*, 56 (12), 1515-1544.

Guthey, E., & Morsing, M. (2014). CSR and the mediated emergence of strategic ambiguity. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 120 (4), 555–569.

Haack, P; Schoeneborn, D; Wickert, C (2012). Talking the Talk, Moral Entrapment, Creeping Commitment? Exploring Narrative Dynamics in Corporate Responsibility Standardization. *Organization Studies*, 33(5- 6):815-845

Hastings, G., Stead, M., Webb, J. (2004). Fear appeals in social marketing: Strategic and ethical reasons for concern, *Psychology and Marketing*, 21(11), 961–986.

Hatch, M. J., & Ehrlich, S. B. (1993). Spontaneous Humour as an Indicator of Paradox and Ambiguity in Organizations. *Organization Studies*, 14: 505-526.

Holbert, R. L., Tchernev, J. M., Walther, W. O., Esralew, S. E. & Benski, K. (2013). Young Voter Perceptions of Political Satire as Persuasion: A Focus on Perceived Influence, Persuasive Intent, and Message Strength, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 57 (2), 170-186.

Innocenti, B. & Miller, E. (2016). The Persuasive Force of Political Humour, *Journal of Communication*, 66, 366-385.

Janney, J. & Gove, S. (2011). Reputation and corporate social responsibility aberrations, trends, and hypocrisy: reactions to firm choices in the stock option backdating scandal, *Journal of Management Studies*, 48, 1562–85.

Kangasharju, H. & Nikko, T. (2009). Emotions in Organisations: Joint Laughter in Workplace Meetings, *International Journal of Business Communication*, 46 (1), 100-119.

Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, London: Routledge.

Laineste, L. (2013). Can the 'Stripping of the Boss' be More Than a Joke. *Integrative Psychological& Behavioral Science*, 47 (4), 482-491.

LaMarre, H. L., & Walther, W. (2013). Ability Matters: Testing the Differential Effects of Political News and Late-Night Political Comedy on Cognitive Responses and the Role of Ability in Micro-Level Opinion Formation. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 25 (3), 303-322.

Lim, M. (2013). Framing Bouazizi: 'White Lies', Hybrid Network, and Collective/ Connective Action in the 2010–11 Tunisian Uprising, *Journalism*, 14 (7), 921-941.

Maignan, I., Ferrell, O.C. & Ferrell, L. (2005), A Stakeholder Model for Implementing Social

Responsibility in Marketing, *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(9–10), 956–77.

Messaris, P., & Abraham, L. (2001). The Role of Images in Framing News Stories. In Reese, S. D., Gandy, O. Jr., & Grant, A. E. (Eds.), *Framing Public life: Perspectives on Media and our Understanding of the Social World* (pp. 215–226). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Meyer, J.C. (2000). Humor as a Double-Edged Sword: Four Functions of Humor in Communication. *Communication Theory*, 3, 10, 310-331.

Meyer, R. E., Höllerer, M. A., Jancsary, D., & van Leeuwen, T. (2013). The Visual Dimension in Organizing, Organisation, and Organisation Research: Core Ideas, Current Developments, and Promising Avenues, *Academy of Management Annals*, 7, 489-555.

Morsing, M. (2017). CSR Communication. What Is It? Why Is It important? In: Rasche, A., Morsing, M., & Moon, J. (Eds.) (2017) *Corporate Social Responsibility – Strategy, Communication and Governance*. Cambridge University Press: London, 281-306.

Morsing, M. & Spence, L. (2019). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication and small and medium sized enterprises: The governmentality dilemma of explicit and implicit CSR communication. *Human Relations* DOI: 10.1177/0018726718804306.

Mulkay, M. (1988). *On Humor: Its Nature and Its Place in Modern Society*, Blackwell.

Mulkay, M. (1988, 3-4) cited in: Hatch, M. J., & Ehrlich, S. B. (1993). Spontaneous humour as an indicator of paradox and ambiguity in organizations. *Organization Studies*, 14: 507.

Nabi, R. L., Moyer-Gusé, E., & Byrne, S. (2007). All Joking Aside: A Serious Investigation into the Persuasive Effect of Funny Social Issue Messages, *Communication Monographs*, 74 (1), 29–54.

Nielsen, M. M. (2011). On Humour in Prison, *European Journal of Criminology*, 8 (6), 500-514.

Parry, S., Jones, R., Stern, P. & Robinson, M. (2013). 'Shockvertising': An exploratory investigation into attitudinal variations and emotional reactions to shock advertising *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 12, 112–121.

Peattie, K. & Crane, A. (2005). Green Marketing: Legend, Myth, Farce or Prophesy?, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 8 (4), 357-370.

Podnar, K. (2008). Guest Editorial: Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 14(2), 75-81.

Puntoni S., Schroeder J. E., & Ritson M. (2010). Polysemy in Advertising, *Journal of Advertising*, 39(2), 51–64.

Ravasi, D. & Phillips, N. (2011). Strategies of Alignment: Organisational Identity Management and Strategic Change at Bang & Olufsen, *Strategic Organisation*, 9 (2), 103-135.

Rebich-Hespanha, S., Rice, R. E., Montello, D. R. Retzloff, S., Tien, S. & Hespanha, J. P. (2015). Image Themes and Frames in US Print News Stories about Climate Change, *Environmental Communication*, 9 (4), 491-519.

Rodríguez, L., & Dimitrova, D. (2011). The Levels of Visual Framing, *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 30 (1), 48-65.

Schroeder, J. E. & Borgerson, J. L. (2005), An Ethics of Representation for International Marketing Communication, *International Marketing Review*, 22 (5) 578-600.

Schroeder, J.E. & Salzer-Morling, M. (2006). Introduction: The Cultural Codes of Branding, in *Brand Culture,* London: Routledge, 1–12

Schroeder, J.E. & Zwick, D. (2007). Mirrors of Masculinity: Representation and Identity in Advertising Images, Consumption, Markets and Culture, 7(1), 21-52.

Sankar, S. & Bhattacharya, C.B. (2001), Does Doing Good Always Lead to Doing Better? Consumer Reactions to Corporate Social Responsibility, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38 (May), 225–44.

Soper, K. (2008). Alternative Hedonism, Cultural Theory and the role of Aesthetic Revisioning, *Cultural Studies*, 22(5), 567-587.

Swaen, V. & Vanhamme, J. (2004). See How Good We Are: The Dangers of Using Corporate Social Activities in Communication Campaigns', in B. Kahn & M. F. Luce (eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, 31, 302–303.

Taylor, J.R., & Cooren, F. (1997). What Makes Communication 'Organisational'? How the Many Voices of a Collectivity Become the One Voice of an Organisation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 27, 409-438.

Waddock, S. & Googins, B. K. (2011). The Paradoxes of Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility, in *The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility* (eds Ø. Ihlen, J. L. Bartlett & S. May), Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, UK.

Wagner, T., Lutz, R. J., & Weitz, B. A. (2009). Corporate Hypocrisy: Overcoming the Threat of Inconsistent Corporate Social Responsibility Perceptions, *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (6), 77-91.

Weick, K. E. (2015). Ambiguity as Grasp: The Reworking of Sense. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management,* 23(2), 117-123.

Winkler, P. Etter, M. & Castello, I. (2019). Vicious and virtuous circles of aspirational talk: From self-persuasive to agnostic CSR rhetoric. *Business & Society,* online only.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Young, M. (2007): http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2007/diesel-global-warming-ready/ Accessed 12 December 2017.

Young, D. G. (2017). Theories and Effects of Political Humor: Discounting Cues, Gateways, and the Impact of Incongruities, in Kenski, K. & Hall Jamieson, K. The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication, Oxford: London.

Zhang, X. & Hellmueller, L. (2017). Visual Framing of the European Refugee Crisis in Der Spiegel and CNN International: Global Journalism in News Photographs, *International Communication Gazette*, 79 (5), 483-510.

Figure 1: Analytical Model Depicting Levels of Irony in Hypocritical CSR Marketing Communications

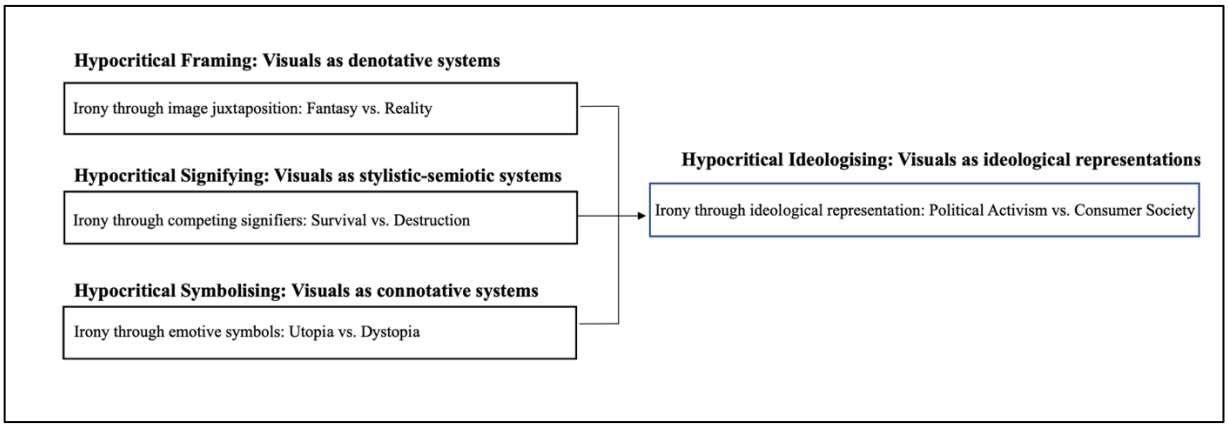

Figure 2. Conceptual Model Illustrating Single vs. Double-Talk in Diesel's Hypocritical CSR Marketing Communications

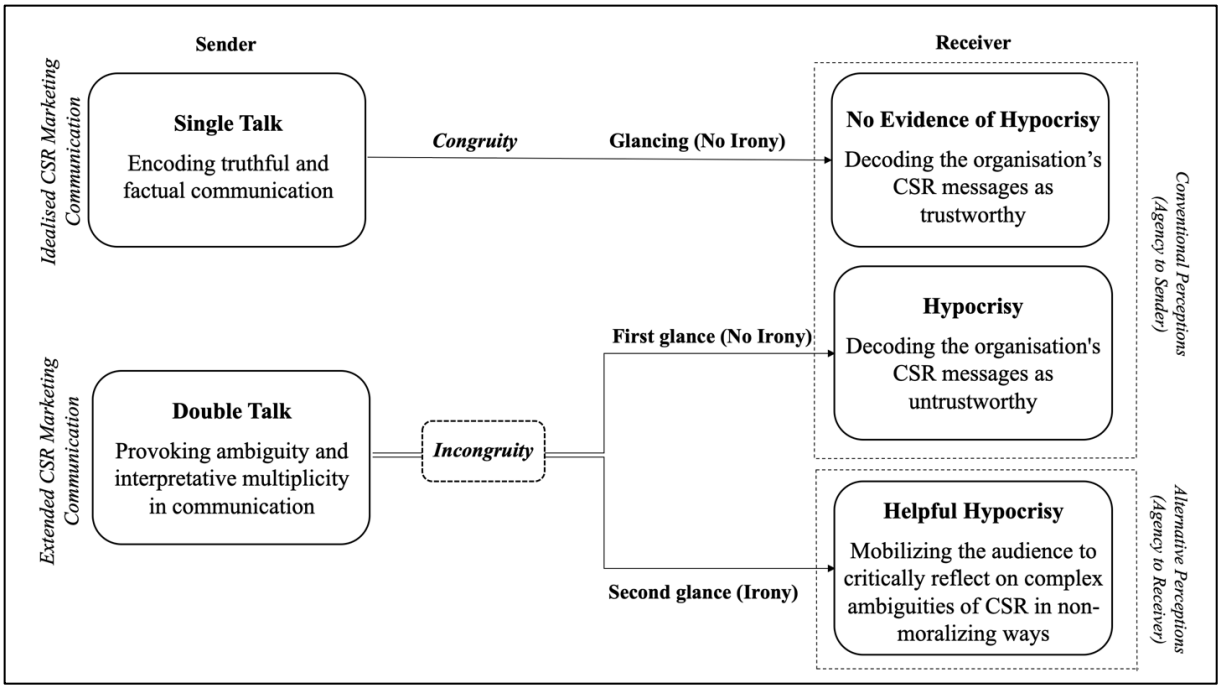

Table 1: Visual Frame Analysis of Diesel's Global Warming Ready Campaign (see Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011)

Level of Analysis	Definition	*First Order Findings*: Visual Evidence	*Second Order Conceptualization:* Double-Talk
Level 1: Visuals as denotative systems	Simple description, organising stimuli into 'themes' without acknowledging interpretation	• 'Fantasy' (real photographs) interlaced with augmented 'reality' (computer simulated backdrop); • 'Commercial frame' (business as usual; the models convey what we would expect from Diesel) vs. 'the science frame' (the world is changing; backgrounds are surprising / unexpected).	**Hypocritical Framing: Irony through Juxtaposition of Contradictory Imagery**
Level 2: Visuals as stylistic-semiotic systems	Stylistic conventions relating to how pictures convey social meanings	• Narratives of 'survival' vs. 'destruction' conveyed through objects e.g. Diesel consumers are thriving in terms of material affluence (survival) yet, even mundane day-to-day activities (such as walking the pet) are surreal (the pet is an iguana in a tropical garden at the foot the Eiffel Tower).	**Hypocritical Signifying: Irony through Presentation of Competing Signifiers**
Level 3: Visuals as connotative systems	Visuals are representative symbols that communicate social meaning	• Inferring emotion: is this utopia (e.g. hedonistic enjoyment conveyed through smiles, relaxed poses) or dystopia (e.g. fearing harmful radiation, excessive amounts of sun cream are applied)?; • Apparent disregard for the climate disasters suggest an adaptive capacity (e.g. playful exchanges, sexual embraces); there is little fear or concern; • Clothing is impractical (e.g. heels in the dessert; bikinis in a world with harmful radiation) meaning that little adjustment of material objects has taken place in this new reality.	**Hypocritical Symbolising: Irony through Emotive Symbols**
Level 4: Visuals as ideological representations	Focus is on the ideological meaning: 'why' are the visuals are being used in this way?	• Is the underlying message one of corporate political activism (e.g. Diesel advocates a more informed stance on climate change) or the consumer society (e.g. selfish consumption at the expense of the planet)? • The images offer perplexing thoughts on capitalism: is this a pro or anti-consumption message?	**Hypocritical Ideologising: Irony through Ideological Representation**

Appendix 1: Images from the Diesel Global Warming Ready campaign

(Please note: permissions are currently being sought to use these images in publication).

Rio de Janeiro underwater

Sandy desert overtakes the Great Wall of China

Tropical birds in St Mark's Square, Venice

Exotic plants and wildlife in Paris

Summer holidays with the penguins in Antarctica

New York City submerged in water

London is an island; the UK is submerged in water

Beach living next to Mount Rushmore